

Student Loan Fund

March 7, 2022

Date of Hearing March 8, 2022

Name of Bill: [S.B. NO.17 - An Act Prohibiting an Institution of Higher Education from Withholding Transcripts.](#)

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Dear members of the Joint Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

I am writing in support of [S.B. NO.17 - An Act Prohibiting an Institution of Higher Education from Withholding Transcripts.](#) Withholding transcripts prevents students and graduates from completing their education and obtaining the employment needed to repay their debts. **Because my former university has withheld my transcripts since 2016, I have not been able to complete my Bachelor's degree. It has stopped me from applying to other schools since official transcripts are required for admission. My professional and personal life have been negatively affected by this and everyday it becomes more apparent that my transcripts hold more weight than intended.**

Colleges and universities use the practice of withholding transcripts (transcript ransom) as a debt collection measure. These debts are usually under \$5,000 and are typically the result of last-minute graduation fees, room and board, lab fees, and other university costs. As you might imagine, this practice disproportionately harms low-income students, students of color, and first-generation students. Transcript ransom penalizes those without financial resources for doing exactly what we as a society have told them to do - going to college. Canceling institutional debt is an allowable use for HEERF and ARP funds. Colleges and universities could cancel all institutional debt if they so desired; they should not be holding students and alumni hostage for these debts.

We need to take action on this issue and you have the opportunity to do so today. Not one more student should have to struggle the way that I did in effort to better themselves and go after their dreams! I ask that you center Connecticut students and graduates and support SB. NO.17 to protect and support us. I commend the committee for introducing such a necessary bill. We are especially grateful for the leadership of Senator Lesser, Representatives Turco, Paris and Kavros Degraw on student debt related issues.

Thank you for your time.

Shannon Mitchell
Student Loan Fund Collective Member